

ASWIR

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ANCIENT SKILLS AND WISDOM
REVIEW

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Reviews are by the
editor unless credited otherwise.

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"THE BOYNE VALLEY VISION" by MARTIN BRENNAN (The Dolmen Press,
Ireland, 1980, £10)

The history of archaeology in Ireland has been one of bitter quarrels, the ascendancy scholars against the nationalists, Christians against pagans, aborigines against immigrants. In 1699 Edward Lhuyd discovered New Grange, and in the late eighteenth century Colonel Vallancey published plans of its interior passageway and chamber. He thought it was a Mithraic sun temple, and his recognition of astronomical features in ancient Irish monuments and traditions led him to believe that Irish culture had originated in the far East. Vallancey's scholarly imagination had a lively effect on Irish antiquarianism for many years, but his qualities were not appreciated by the scientific archaeologists and he was written off. The history of modern Irish archaeology has been a lamentable record of treasure hunting, the neglect of minor monuments and clumsy excavations and restorations at the famous sites such as New Grange. For years archaeologists have been insisting that the great Irish chambered mounds were designed for burials only, and they have ignored and often destroyed features which indicated otherwise. Quite recently Professor O'Kelly stripped the earth from New Grange down to the roofing stones of the passage, which he removed for inspection, at the same time dismantling the "roof box" over the entrance which allows the sun's rays to penetrate the inner chamber at the winter solstice. The results are that the roof, which kept the inside bone dry for thousands of years, now lets in the damp, while the path of the sunbeam through the roof box is no longer precisely as it was.

The above information come from Martin Brennan, whose book has caused the greatest scandal among Irish archaeologists since the days of Vallancey. Brennan was the star of last year's ley hunters' Moot with his summary of work on the astronomical mounds and the remarkable inscriptions in them.

His book describes the methods by which he is beginning to interpret them in connection with the rays of the sun and moon which illuminate them at certain seasons. Last autumn equinox I went with Brennan, his colleague, Jack Roberts, and other seekers after ancient sunbeams up to a chambered mound high in the Loughcrew Mountains. As the sun rose, a narrow beam of light entered the chamber and moved at surprising speed along the stones at its end, picking out one by one the various symbols with which they are carved. The effect was of a moving finger spelling out a story in an unknown language. This was obviously no place of burial but a chamber of initiation or instruction or ceremonial observation or some such activity which continued throughout the year. For as the sunrise point moves so that the chamber is no longer illuminated, another chamber in another local mound begins to receive the light. In discovering these, Brennan and his collaborators have not been content with working from plans, but have spent nights inside the mounds, charting and photographing the passage of moonbeams across the carved symbols or waiting for the first light of dawn.

The subject of this book is exciting in itself and Brennan's enthusiasm makes it more so. He is an Irish American who was initiated into the Shinto tradition in Japan

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and was encouraged by his teachers to investigate the ancient scientific relics in Ireland, said by them to have been the centre of an early civilization.

Another book by him will be published this year, but as an introduction to the vast store of unread megalithic lore still intact, The Boyne Valley Vision is the most stimulating book so far of the 1980s. Critics have pointed out numerous mistakes in the details of Brennan's geometry and in several of his statements, but such things are liable to occur in that rarest of all publications, a book of genuine originality. A corrected edition is needed to make this book worthy of its position as a landmark in the new archaeology.

-- John Michell.

* * * * *

"THE OLD STONES OF LAND'S END" by JOHN MICHELL (Pentacle Books,
6 Perry Road, Bristol 1, £3-25 + 30p p&p)

This book was first published in 1974 as an answer to the probability statisticians who challenged the veracity of the ley concept. Alfred Watkins and all those who followed him were absolved of wishful thinking by this survey which should have confounded the most obtuse sceptic. In fact, the situation is still unresolved for the hardened doubters, whereas to those with open minds the book does for leys what Prof. Alexander Thom did for astroarchaeology. It is a thorough, challenging and realistic assessment of the deliberate positioning of stones in the West Penwith peninsula of Cornwall, both with regard to one another and also taking into account intervisibility. This extra confirmatory evidence for the statistical argument for leys being beyond the capacity of the computer programmes run on the grid references of the ancient stones.

Additionally this work, subtitled "An Enquiry into the Mysteries of the Megalithic Science", puts the remarkably accurate surveying and technology of the Ancient Britons into a wider perspective. The essay "Megalithic Science" is moved from its original position at the back of the book to the more apt one of preceding the actual survey. Michell condenses the arguments and evidence for a radical reappraisal of the society which constructed the various megalithic structures and laid them out so economically. The full implications have yet to be learned, but Michell's pioneering work has been both a personal triumph and the direction and vision which it enshrined has inspired a new generation of researchers to endorse and expand his speculations.

In addition to the change already referred to, another difference from the hardback of the mid-Seventies is a new four-page introduction (marred, however, by gremlins at the printer's repeating a slab of type). This brings up to date events since the book's first publication and explains the work's purpose.

The survey was first previewed in The Ley Hunter during my period of editorship and it is here written up meticulously with site descriptions, engravings, plans and photographs. Certainly the photographs are a delight, but they are not in every case particularly clear and their presentation is not as classy as in the big hardback. Nevertheless a good, straightforward record of stones, some of which are no more. I recall also John showing me one of those not included here of John F. Neal balancing precariously on the top of a large standing stone. It must have been great fun doing the outdoors research.

The book is rounded off with bibliography and addenda.

If you still need convincing about leys and the advanced civilization of the megalith builders then this book is an antidote to orthodoxy's scorn and opinion that our ancestors were savages whose lives were brief, brutish and drenched in fearful and fanciful superstition.

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"THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES" : CHARLES DARWIN (Mentor / New
American Library, £1-50)

Charles Darwin's belief that evolution is a response to external influences can be countered by John Michell's view that the process is created by archetypal lifeforms giving rise to variegated structures seen in the natural world and which respond

According to the genius loci and environmental character. Michell's "Simulacra" (thames & Hudson, 1979) is a challenging response and alternative to Darwin. Michell's vision is also a religious one in that the physical is seen to reflect the metaphysical with the forms of nature encodifying the secrets of God's Creation. The creation myth and (anti-) social effects of this cancerous culpability are also shown by Michell in a recent Quicksilver Messenger magazine article.

Darwin's apologists find their evidence in curious changing behavioural traits. I've always had a soft spot for hedgehogs and their squashed forms on roads saddens me. First reported from Lancs (though this all may be apocryhal), these prickly customers have been reputed stopping in their tracks and then running back to the verge from approaching car headlights. Richard Mabey, whose work I admire generally, utilises this by arguing: "It's not impossible that this is a genuine piece; that so many hedgehogs are being killed on the road that those non-conformists with a genetic tendency to flee rather than curl up at the approach of danger are surviving and increasing their strain." Mabey does not deserve being pilloried for humourously supporting evolution in this way, but it is dubious, contentious and unstatistical throwaway comments such as this which reinforce a myth and constitute the insidious manner in which it is perpetuated.

Actually "The Origin of Species" reads, if one were not too well read or aware, quite convincingly and the superficiality is drowned by a torrent of seemingly reasonable and reasoned claims.

Darwinism initially flourished for many reasons not directly associated with it, such as country pursuits taking on a nostalgic aura due to growing industrialization, urbanization and materialism. In today's morally bankrupt society one would hardly expect other than that such an idea would be dominant.

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"INVENTORUM NATURA" by UNA WOODRUFF (Paper Tiger, £5-25)

Not every book worthy of lavish publicity when breaking new ground in a remarkable way receives the impetus it deserves. This 1979 work has regrettably been overlooked. Perhaps, there are still copies to be found. I hope so. It has maybe suffered from a sense of alienation. It has achieved little publicity, I suspect, and only the Heathcote Williams review in Fortean Times have I noted. At least he understood its genesis and genius.

I hope I am not insulting anyone, but maybe others misunderstood the work or worse still suspected a spoof, hoax or worse still fraud. This is no book to put beside Peter Dance's epitaph to jenny hanivers and other showground curiosities.

One suspects that had John Michell not given his name in the introduction, it might have been accepted otherwise. Michell, as those well-read know is hardly likely to ever be president Charles Darwin Appreciation Society and his book Simulacra echoes some of the findings here described. Una Woodruff's book is subtitled "The Expedition Journal of Pliny the Elder" and it makes the puny Darwin's voyage in The Beagle sound as enterprising and inspiring as a ferryboat trip across the Mersey. Pliny does not make the one-eyed Arimaspians sound inferior to Romans as did Darwin see Hottentots as savage subordinate Samboes to a Western elitist supremacy.

Pliny the Elder showed excellent sense in describing what he saw and the problems and technicalities undertaken with the manuscript by Michell and the artist show great credit. The original Latin and its translation match up with skillfully redrawn and full colour illustrations of the baffling bestiary. Too often those utilising such old data edit out the seemingly ridiculous but we have here honest scholarship.

Sea dragons as described here have been recorded off Blackhall Rocks a few miles from where I live, Barmouth, and Cornwall, so why should any other species here recorded be regarded as odd? fanciful? or impossible???

It is a beautiful book and a major work of art whose worth may only be fully appreciated in years to come.

The authenticity of the work may seem dubious, but I have seen no challengers. Michell is at pains to discuss the rumour aspect which had been placed upon this manuscript, and others, in the possession of a Somerset family. I can assure readers of the authenticity

for the same owner has graciously allowed me to reproduce a sample from the same work; the page having become detached due to its delicate condition and only found at a more recent date. A friend's translation -- he admits his Latin is now rather rusty -- goes as follows:

THE RED BREASTED FROG

Following the tadpole stage this oddity of Bohemia leaves the pond. It wanders until found by a galian toad (*Bufo Mammary Rubra*) which caresses it and under the stimulus of this attention exudes from a gland a sweet liquid. After this has been going on for about an hour it gets bored and loses consciousness. The toad then siezes it like a cat might pick a kitten and carries it away, croaking with undisguised triumph. It is fed by the toad on worms and then metamorphoses and creeps out of the passage as a lesser red breasted frog.

The fact that this has never been observed in our lifetime in no way invalidates Pliny or the Woodruff/Michell work. Instead of doubting the likes of Pliny, we should wonder how such a complex, eccentric, aberrant adaptation has been created despite the supposedly natural evolutionary processes of Messrs Darwin, Lamarch and DeVries.

This work is a milestone in fring biology.

"DRAGONS" by PETER HOGARTH with VAL CLERY (Allen Lane, £7-95)

What a veritable treasure of a book for those attracted to dragons. The lore and legend of the dragon is rich and this book does it proud. Profusely illustrated and mostly in colour, here are depictions of fabulous beasts from all ages and lands and all manner of illustrators. As stimulating as the pictures are breathtaking, the text is erudite and entertaining. The style is easy to read and leavened with moments of dry humour. Well researched and covering most aspects and speculations about dragons, here is a splendid feast for the inquiring reader.

Where a civilisation develops a mythology, numerous legends of fabulous dragons and supernatural serpents will perpetuate these popular and symbolic tales. They may seek to explain the origin and nature of the universe, but equally (as with the Dragon of Wantley referring to a wicked landowner) the macrocosm can become microcosm in allegory. There are also more mundane tales whose unravelling can bring in theories as diverse as prehistoric leftovers, twisted memories of invaders boats or banners or even men marching in serpentine formation, right through to the dragon as vehicle of the gods or simply a term for what is today called a UFO.

The authors here have a strong grasp of the allegorical level of dragonlore, seeing the original slayer Marduk, who killed his mother, as being a precursor of gods such as Thor, Lancelot of Arthurian mythos, saints such as George on the side of good, and all the knights who dispatched monsters causing little local difficulties. Not to mention the psychological dynamic between such a family killing. They also note how important it is that riches are delivered to the hero; be they spiritual, fanciful, a bride or as generally in Britain an area of land.

The tenor is generally confident though they early on point out an ambiguity of dragons being associated with such effects as lightning, earthquakes, drought, illnesses and confusion, all of which will be readily explained by Velikovskians as relating to the cometary action of bodies such as Venus spat out of Jupiter causing chaos and catastrophes. In the first section on ancient dragons they underline the fact that though the dragon or serpent is a primary figure in creation myths, it also makes a major appearance at the end of the world, as in the Judaeo-Christian Day of Judgment. More cometary chaos to come? This chapter is very full, covering the Old Testament, India and China. The second section on Classical times points, too, to stories conforming in their essentials to earlier creation myths, with a god confronting a monster, partly dragon, and symbolizing storms. The turbulent uncertainty of the Dark Ages brought about a proliferation of dragon tales and from this time was to emerge a terrifying dragon to inhabit the imagination of the European Middle Ages, drawn from various sources and full of menace, evil and death, requiring a continuous parade of challengers to dispatch it.

Like the archaeologists of yesteryear they strongly favour a diffusionist model for the

transmission of dragonlore, seeing the traders of long ago having the same gift of the gab as the commercial traveller of today. However, our psychological components seem similarly widespread worldwide so a psychic or simply inbuilt process could account for similarities and cultural differences for dissimilarities.

They deal with such activities of mediaeval times as producing bogus dragon skeletons for the gullible, manufacturing false dragons' blood and the practices of alchemy and astrology.

The Renaissance failed to force the dragon into the backwater of legend, but chose to include it in its bestiary as a living species. Voyagers brought back reports of legitimate dragons from every part of the world they visited.

Modern fiction writers such as Arthur Conan Doyle surmised a valley of dinosaurs still extant and such views fuelled the notion that dragons could be memories of extinct saurians. At the close of the book they consider lake monsters such as that of Loch Ness and also those of other continents.

They consider that we need dragons more than they need us, as evinced by such films as "Jaws", with sharks substituting for the dragons which have secluded themselves from us in our age of supposed rationalism and enlightenment. They even suggest that had he pursued his inquiry further, the psychologist C.G. Jung would have concluded that the dragon is an archetype designed to stimulate heroism in us.

And: "The history of dragons is the stuff that man is made of; the study of dragons is the study of the human mind."

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"THE COMPLETE BOOK OF TREASURE HUNTING" by KATE JOHNSON (Arthur

(Barker / Weidenfeld, £5-50)

Treasure hunters create some violent reactions. Readers of a magazine such as this will probably have a mixed but open-minded view on the subject. Certainly ley hunters pale into insignificance as an enemy of archaeology when treasure hunters are mooted.

As a journalist I approached the subject with an undogmatic interest and wrote a lengthy article in The Mail, Hartlepool, last year. I went out and shivered on Seaton Carew beach with three metal detector enthusiasts and they found a few oddments. I also spent time talking at length with the local museum's curator, whose contact with the treasure hunters had been cautious. However, he appreciated it when they presented items or allowed them to be catalogued. Both agreed at the time that an irresponsible minority had given the pursuit a bad name in some quarters.

I gave the curator plenty of column inches to put his case, including his assessment that in the long run it would have been better had such instruments been banned.

For a qualified view of archaeologists I took the extremist Dr Peter Fowler and balanced this with the following comment from earth mysteries doyen John Michell:

"Almost every academic book on archaeology including those of the modern professors of the subject are founded on such deep misconceptions that they are practically valueless. In fact most are actively pernicious in that they encourage the destruction of ancient sites by clumsy excavation, thus removing evidence which would later be of significance."

Little known to the curator, his boss was a personal friend of mine and when we met for a pint a couple of days after my feature article appeared, he recounted how at a museums committee meeting the curator had jumped up, denounced me as biased and assured those present that he would take the matter further in the strongest terms. His chief had also read my piece and acknowledging its balance had surmised his underling was simply trying to make political capital in front of the committee. No letter of comment or complaint was sent to The Mail and when I next encountered the curator he waved cheerily.

But what of Kate Johnson? She is delightfully photographed by her husband and her toothy good looks will already be well known to those who have seen her many expert articles in magazines serving this burgeoning outdoors interest.

This book can be regarded as a definitive introduction to a hobby which, if undertaken responsibly, can give great pleasure, financial reward, historical understanding, create friendships, and be healthy. Over-reactive archaeological traumas are unwarranted and in cases where the mark has been overstepped, any mud-slinging can be taken as the pot calling the kettle black.

In fact, genuine archaeological sites are probably largely at little risk as it is historical sites such as where fairs were held which form the most productive environs. Few enthusiasts are ignorant enough to cause destruction and only small amounts of grass need to be raised to find objects, unlike the (literal) bulldozer tactics employed at the Roman Wall, for instance.

There is advice on beachcombing, country sites, paths, prospecting, dump digging and rockhounding (it used to be called geology). Kate Johnson writes simply and concisely and knows what she is talking about. There are no abstruse terms and the approach to the subject, how to increase yields, look after and clean finds, plus use of historical data in old records and from ancient maps is given. The legal aspects are given and also the proper way to approach those upon whose land you wish to undertake detecting.

There is plenty of advice on the actual use of the modern gadgetry, which can be as expensive as the user chooses, and also an account of how to use the earlier techniques of dowsing and its theory and practice.

To spur on your interest there are accounts and pictures of the "pools winners" of treasure hunting who have scooped up coin hoards. Some strike lucky and some do little more than pay for their equipment, batteries, travel and so on. Nevertheless it is obviously a rewarding hobby, one to be encouraged, and a useful and informative pursuit.

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"THE MEMBERS OF THE STRAIGHT TRACK CLUB" compiled by H.C. Harper (Hereford Philosophical & Antiquarian Society, Research Paper No. 1, price unknown).

Clive Harper is hon. archivist and this slim booklet merely lists the names of S.T.C. members alphabetically and giving vague addresses. There was hardly any requirement to hide their actual street numbers as only

Egerton Sykes is alive today. The Seventies saw two others, Allen Watkins dies in his eighties and Charles R. Mayo die at 93, I believe. On the surface a most dull looking item, but those people are more than just names. Flesh and blood persons, they were pioneers of ley hunting and helped lay the foundations of the study, without whose enthusiasm we would still be decades behind in our researches. Their names form a roll call of worthy predecessors.

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The reader would be forgiven for suspecting this to have purely parochial interest, but as its compiler

Clive Harper notes in the introduction, John Michell first drew attention to the hamlet of Whiteleaved Oak and others such as Michael Behrend, Michael Beckett, Paul Devereux and Ian Thomson have mentioned it in a geomantic context. The brief work covers the tree and its superstitions, boundary usage, Christmas tradition and Alfred Watkins.

"QUERCUS ROBUR VARIEGATA -- Notes on the history and lore of the Whiteleaved Oak in Herefordshire" (H.P.&A.S., Research Paper, No. 2, price unknown).

For price and availability H.C. Harper can be contacted at 102 Totteridge Road, High Wycombe, Bucks., HP13 6EX.

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"SACRED GEOMETRY" by NIGEL PENNICK (Turnstone Press, £3-95)

Nigel Pennick, marine biologist, founder of the Institute for Geomantic Research and one of the stalwarts of the earth mysteries movement, here argues for geometry underlying the structure of all things and man's expression through sacred structures, from prehistoric circles to Art Nouveau, revealing that this timeless principle mirrors the geometry of the cosmos. "Sacred Geometry" traces the rise and fall of this system of symbolism and purpose in religious structures.

He gives a historical panorama from the days of the megalith builders, when magic, religion and science were inseparable, through the Egyptian, Classical, Romanesque, Islamic, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque eras and on to the present. Proportion and harmony were recognized at all times and naturally the laws cut across artificial boundaries of

politics and transcended sectarian religious considerations. They also occurred throughout the organic and non-organic kingdoms.

The systems of geometry, he argues, though "initially derived from natural forms, often exceeded them in complexity and ingenuity, and were imbued with magic powers and profound psychological meaning." Geometry is more than an abstract mathematical process but also a mystical one. It measures and reflects all manifestations throughout the universe and is particularly observable in man himself.

Earth mysteries students will find a synthesis of alignment theorists such as W.H. Black, L. MacLellan Mann, Josef Heinsch, Alfred Watkins and John Michell, before more exotic climes and ages are detailed. Purists, however, may baulk at the use of the term ley line rather than ley.

As for the mediaeval period, Pennick shows how the elevations of churches were determined directly from the ground plans. Surviving records show concern by the designers with precise dimensions and proportions. The apparatus and vestments of the clergy also conforming to geometrical fundamentals. Pennick points to particular edifices to explain the reality of his thesis and to argue against the detractors who believed churches were built for a set sized congregation and bits were altered and added willy-nilly.

Coming to the present century, Pennick focuses on the outstanding and enigmatic Roman Catholic Antoni Gaudi, the famous Le Corbusier, C.G. Jung, and the link-up between energy and geometrical patterns. We are still learning about the symbolism of geometry, but it has been eternal since creation. This book widens the scope of sacred geometry and shows how those interested in earth mysteries theories can find it in the dimensions of the structures they study and also in the apparent telluric power so evidently associated with sacred -- and secular -- buildings.

There are plenty of photographs and diagrams, the text is concise and written in a controlled style far from that utilised in the author's more anarchistically (in all senses) inclined outpourings, and all in all the book is a treat.

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"THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST CULTS" edited by MARTIN EBON (Signet/

New American Library, £1-25)

An extremely nasty but entralling and salutary warning of what one can become involved with unless commonsense prevails. Ebon has gathered articles on a wide variety of strange sects and beliefs of varying degrees of fanaticism and outrageous behaviour.

Aleister Crowley gets several mentions but he seems a kindly soul compared with Adolf Hitler and his cronies. Even Anton LaVey, America's best-known Satanist, has a kind of lunatic sanity about his behaviour and peculiar logic. The Bo and Peep pair of millenarianists come over as rather pathetic, as do the self-deluded believers in salvation from an extraterrestrial technology with vibrating intercessors on Earth forecasting the coming of flying saucers.

The most interesting articles are Dr Berthold E. Schwartz's study of the practitioners of snake handling and strychnine drinking fundamentalist religion in America; those who chose self-crucifixion; and Jerome Clark's interesting but ultimately puzzled pursuit of the American outbreak of cattle mutilations and the propounded sex and Satanism link.

The Rastafarian concept was of interest as a sociological study of Jamaicans and, in fact, the only bummer for me was a supposed firsthand confession by a girl in a Manson-style group. Apart from that, a varied and entertaining overview of the varieties of cults made without too much sensationalism or overt condemnation.

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"THE COMPLETE BOOK OF MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT" by KATHRYN PAULSEN

(Signet/ New American Library, £1)

A primer for the budding occultist, which even gives advice on how to do harm by working evil. However, most of the spells sound too ludicrous to work, such as baptizing a toad in the name of the victim and make it swallow a consecrated host to harm

8. a rival in love. A malicious phone call would probably be less trouble and more effective.

Actually it will probably most likely attract the type of reader interested in folk customs and country lore. The revised version here expands beyond a European context to give a broader view by examining magical practices in other continents. There is much historical material and philosophical viewing of the occult. Numbers, times, colours and divinatory pursuits are all given so there is plenty to please the lovers of prophecy.

The blurb proclaims in red blood letters below a skull: "The unique guide to everything you need to become a witch!" Really?

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SOON I ASSURE YOU. FEWER
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IGR/FENRIS-WOLF. The prodigious Nigel Pennick has been producing his usual fare and some of his recent material will be mentioned. His I.G.R. publishes Ancient Mysteries, sub. £3-75 a year (U.S. 9 dollars), Q, plus occasional papers during currency of sub. From 142 Pheasant Rise, Bar Hill, Cambridge, CB3 8SD. No. 17.

ANCIENT MYSTERIES. No. 17. Talks given at "Hird Cambridge Geomancy Symposium with Jim Kimmis on the Royal highway, Jeff Saward on turf makes; Philip Heselton on zodiacs; S.G. Wildman obituary; 1570 beacon map; maze dowsing; Nazi map dowsing; latest on Camb. Ley Project and ley/Earth curvature; John Billingsley on Japan; a translation of Josef Heinsch piece. Plus misc. called "Observatory", readers' letters, reviews.....

IGR OCCasional Paper, No. ..

"WALRUS". The official organ of the non-material world. (45p inc. p&p)
No. 15. (it says on front) or No. 16 (it says on page 1.). Editorial on big business and transport, full of conspiracy theory; Rupert Pennick on 23 unconvincingly; attack on Church of England's wealth; plus various oddities not normally found in staid Press.

"WHITE BEAST AND SACRED SITE", by Jeremy Harte. Splendid engraving of Chillingham cattle on cover and three types of motif discussed -- that in which a beast is found at a site (often a hountiful cow); that in which it is deliberately chosen to divine the site; and that in which it chooses conversely to select an alternative site.

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MAGS. LANTERN: Published by Borderline Scientific Investigation Group as a group as Q mag of East Anglian mysteries and curiosities. From 3 Dunwich Way, Oulton Broad, Lowestoft, Suffolk. Sub. £1-20; U.S. 5 dollars. No. 31. Conclusion of diary of a major haunting; a Suffolk ley; UFO reports; witchcraft; plus book review, letter and misc.

QUICKSILVER MESSENGER. The South-East magazine of earth mysteries. From C. Ashton, 26a Wilbury Avenue, Hove, Sussex, Sub. Q. £2-40. No. 1. Impressive new regional EM mag with plenty of interesting articles by experts to give it an initial boost. Lovely cover of baby dowsing and A4 size with illos. Colin Bloy gives an introduction to ley dowsing (also No. 2); Ward Rutherford writes on bonfire societies and their lore; Egerton Sykes reminisces on leys and zodiacs and I hope readers do not take his views too seriously; Mike Collier introduces a commentary on a Brighton stone by J.F. Forbes and Iris Campbell; editor Chris Ashton describes the Alfriston ley and the village's Star Inn. No. 2. Brilliant analysis of Darwinism and its social and mythical effects by John Michell; Chris Ashton on Hove's Goldstone; plus reviews, phenomena and reactions.

NORTHERN EARTH MYSTERIES. Newsletter of NEMG. Roughly every 2/3 months. £2 six issues. Single copies 45p. From P. Heselton, 61 Clumber Street, Hull, HU5 3RH. No. 8. John Barnatt interpreting Cornish sites (also No. 9); Phil Reeder hunting dragon legends in South Yorkshire; Paul Screeton setting the record straight on stones near Yeavinger Bell, Northumberland. Plus reviews of mags and my "Tales of the Hexham Heads" book (70p inc. postage from Paul Screeton), exhibition review, Calder Valley mysteries and other misc. items. No. 9. John Billingsley looks at feminism, anarchy and EM, putting forward pertinent points on a milieu cropping up these days (2 replies No. 10); Ted Armstrong discusses Kallington's serpent officy (also 10); Paul Screeton tracks down a fake mermaid and its lore; C.S. Hay on electrical phenomena; regional ley index mooted. No. 10. Wilhelm Reich gets good press in first three articles.....BUT ENDS

"GRADUALLY BUT QUICKLY IT MOVED UP" -- UFOs AND THE PRESSBy PAUL SCREESTON

"Putting in a picture of Helen Ferguson half-naked won't make me read that rubbish," colleague Norman commented bitingly.

Always one to pooh-pooh any aspect of the paranormal, Norman naturally poured scorn on any reference to UFOs.

HELEN FERGUSON

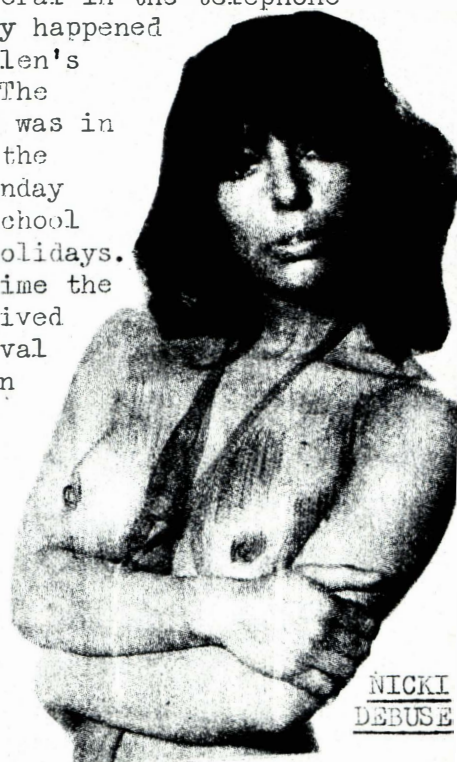
My use of Helen Ferguson pictorially in The Mail, Hartlepool -- it being a "family" newspaper -- had the young lady depicted with plenty of cleavage, but the picture had been decorously cropped just above the nipples (the identical picture appeared in Revue without this prudish surgery). Not gratuitous pulchritude to enliven a subject of little interest or scorn for some, the use of Helen was justified by her having witnessed a strange aerial phenomenon and this being over Hartlepool,

Having seen vague references to this event in captions accompanying her depiction in scanty clothing or back-to-front swimwear, I decided to get to the bottom, metaphorically, of her sighting. Not that I needed to justify my inquiry for I was using several other witness accounts of UFOs in our circulation area in my attendant article. (1)

By sheer chance the first of the Hartlepool Fergusons I rang from several in the telephone directory happened to be Helen's mother. The sighting was in 1974 on the first Monday of the school summer holidays. At the time the family lived in The Oval and Helen

awakened her mother to share the experience.

"I didn't believe in such things," Mrs Pat Ferguson told me, "and thought it must be a reflection. However, we opened the window and could see this red ball shape in the sky. We watched it hover over trees and it seemed to be turning slightly. Then it just disappeared. I mentioned it to several people and when I went back to Manor School in the September some pupils who had been camping behind Ward Jackson Park told me they had seen it, too."

NICKI
DEBUSE

ANSWER FOCUS SUPPLEMENT

Orthoteny -- a subject many must have thought long dead or never even previously encountered -- rears its head once more courtesy of EARTHLINK. It is the subject of the largest piece in the autumn 1979 issue (though published May 1980) and is actually a shortened version of Jimmy Goddard's booklet "Handbook of Leys and Orthoteny" now long out of print. The publishers could surely have found someone to have given an update and Jimmy himself would, I'm sure, have been only too happy to oblige. However, it is good to see the link resurrected, though the somewhat tenuous link certainly requires a proper reappraisal. Most interesting for me was a repeat of the first Apollo landing claim of footprints on the moon apocryphal story (I would welcome any other readers' comments or specific data on this). Also covered are encounters in Malaysia, Australian UFOs, Brinsley le Poer Trench on a visit to Japan, Lynne P. Halsall on perception of UFO beings, various "experts" on an unusual contactee's claims, and more. I understand a subsequent issue deals with mutilations. Subscription is £2.75 (£2 if under-16) for four issues, single copy 70p. Monies payable to "Earthlink", 16 Raydons Road, Dagenham, Essex, RM9 5JR.

A reader's letter in The Mail for August 2, 1974, confirmed the red spinning light of the Monday night it seems, though absolute certainty is spoiled by the account giving both a Monday as July 28 and 29. More on this lackadaisical checking by newspaper staff follows.

I include this sober account to deliberately counterpoint the banality of the captions which have accompanied her artistic poses. How true it is I wonder, but at one time the job of Page 3 picture caption writer on the tits 'n' bum Sun was a highly-paid and prized job for a single individual. Still, jealousy will get me nowhere.

Anyway, here are a selection of gems from the tabloids linking Helen and her sighting with embroidery of the most whimsical kind.

SPACE AGE LOVELY

Starry-eyes Helen Ferguson is a space freak. Flying saucers are her cup of tea. If one lands today the little green men are bound to seek a close encounter of the Page Three kind. When they spot our 24-year-old star, you can be sure their eyes will be out on stalks.

HELEN'S A FAN OF THE LITTLE GREEN MEN

Shapely Helen Ferguson believes in close encounters -- she is a flying saucer fan. (She) has definitely seen a flying saucer, she says. Helen's heavenly body must have been a dazzling sight for any little green men aboard. And any woman on the saucer would certainly be green -- with envy.

LOOK FOR HELEN'S HEAVENLY BODY

Super Helen Ferguson from Hartlepool is certainly a girl with spirit. She wants to see a ghost. Already Helen reckons she has spotted a flying saucer. But the outlook is grim for any alien who tries to make a close encounter -- Helen's keen on karate.

Whatever happened to intellectual investigative journalism? Okay, so a silly or witty caption suits the subject, but it reflects the insidious way the popular Press impresses a trivial and mocking attitude towards ufology.

I have published this year four lengthy and analytical articles on UFOs in The Mail, Hartlepool, for whom I work as a sub-editor. Also one sighting account and pictures took up almost a full page, though Dirk van der Werff's sterling work would probably have been relegated to a much smaller space had I not been assigned the task of laying it out and fortuitously a spare page had fallen available.

Such factors as this make the impact and slant on UFOs an arbitrary journalistic fact. My department head whenever UFOs are mentioned mutters, "as I was leaving the North Eastern Hotel I looked up and saw....." He is here recalling the mention of that particular public house in a UFO report, but conveniently forgetting the witnesses were two schoolboys passing who saw an object in the sky.

When I worked on the Hull Daily Mail 12 years ago I was impressed with the cuttings file on UFOs seen over Humberside. When I asked the deputy editor if it would be all right to do a retrospective article on the sightings for the newspaper, he shook his head and stated darkly, "The editor doesn't like flying saucers."

The quality of any report relating to UFOs will vary substantially from newspaper to newspaper, depending on the views held at various levels. The editor may have a policy of discouraging coverage (which could have been declared by the proprietor) or conversely take the view that subjects such as UFOs, ghosts, and Fortean events are talking points and help sell newspapers.

The nationals occasionally have a big -- though brief -- campaign regarding UFOs. The Daily Express and Sun being prime examples. Regional newspapers sometimes focus on the subject either by writing up material from their files, talking to members of the local UFO society or giving space to a contemporary sighting.

Here the reporter is the key factor. If he is interested in the subject then the perspective of sightings will make sense, the discussion with local ufologists be sympathetic and the investigation into the "hot" sighting be useful to other researchers. As often as not he will be ultra-sceptical and not be thorough, scornful even, and favour any debunking explanation he can elicit.

As for the sub-editor, he may choose to make alterations to fit his worldview, particularly rewriting the "intro" and making it seem supposedly humorous. But it is the headline where the mischief manifests magnificently mainly.

Let us just look at one appalling case: The Northern Echo reported a mysterious red flare had seen to fall below the skyline The Salutation public house, Billingham, and a police spokesman quipped: "If it was from outer space they must have been thirsty." This sparked off the headline "UFO -- 'or thirsty spacemen' -- Spotted".

Here the journalist was being facetious but often sloppiness does little to put faith in his profession. A witness, reporter and sub-editor allowed the following item of evidence to appear in the Billingham Express: "Gradually, but quickly, it moved up in the high sky and disappeared."

This downright sloppiness I have named the Nicki Debus Syndrome. Like Helen Ferguson, Miss Debus is another curvaceous topless model whose body graces the tabloids and calendars. I began to notice that her name kept appearing in different forms (as did her age) throughout the popular Press and kept a tally. This enjoyable piece of research revealed that she was Nicki on 29 occasions, Nicky and Niki on four occasion each and Nickie three times. This indicates sloppy caption writing and sub-editorial incompetence in not checking and allowing over a period this brazen inconsistency. It manifests among reporters and photographers with the attitude "the subs will put it right", and from there an idle sub-editor may take one of several courses of laissez-faire: "If it's wrong the comps will alter it", or "the readers' department will catch it", or "no one will notice if it's wrong". (2) (**)

Flying saucers, too, suffer from the Nicki Debus Syndrome, for scant care for accuracy and fair play is observed towards reports generally. As far as the average journalist and his newspaper are concerned a sighting today can be stained by vinegar and chips the following evening. For Fleet Street a UFO encounter is as fleeting as that morning's newspaper and for an evening provincial as transient as was the multi-coloured disc hovering in the sky, and just so long as it was in the newspaper's circulation area -- a mile outside and the story could be spiked.

References:

- (1) Screeton, Paul, "Aerial Pyramid Hovered Over High Throston", The Mail, Hartlepool, May 22, 1980.
- (2) Screeton, Paul, "The Nicki Debus Syndrome", Northern Earth Mysteries, No. 6, May, 1980.
- (**) Miss Debus (or de Buse in Revue magazine) has also been credited with the Christian name Nikki twice since the last survey and the Nicki tally is now 33. Even more crazy is that she is called Lorna in the naturists' organ (no pun intended) Health and Efficiency in a recent issue. Further information, cuttings, photographs welcomed.....

"THE DARK GODS"
by ANTHONY ROBERTS
& GEOFF GILBERTSON
(Rider/Hutchinson,
£7-95).

Strangely, Tony Roberts waits until page 70 before getting to the nitty gritty. He admits the preceding ultraterrestrial undertones, but concludes that a dozen foregoing case studies of UFOs when carefully scrutinized add up to three main types of "physical" UFO, including one witnessed ten years previously by his wife Janet and he. I, too, have seen disc and cigar-shaped UFOs, but still feel the phenomenon is basically psychosociological, though finding it hard to relate this to a personal belief in elementals as existing separately to humanity or purely energy fields. It is a most complex business and the authors here tax the reader's attention attractively rather than titillate or spoonfeed.

Roberts states the book's thesis succinctly in the second paragraph that the human race has been consistently plagued throughout its history by "dark forces". These are the dark gods of the title: the gods and goddesses, various elementals, hierarchies of demons and angels, the personification of nature's diverse energies.

Basically they are developing the ideas of John A. Keel and Jacques Vallee, founders of modern ufology. Roberts proposes a control syndrome incorporating both elements of

the psychic, magical, mythological and paranormal, but also sociological and technological paradigms. This comprehensive syndrome, he suggests, may have as its true source the realms of the metaphysical, exteriorized here through the hypothesis of the Dark Gods. "Then," writes Roberts, "the full cosmic connection becomes more readily apparent."

Roberts identifies as culprits many scientists and points to how they are used as puppets by the Dark Gods' seduction techniques. "A scientist without a metaphysic is an intellectual eunuch," he rightly observes.

Nevertheless he acknowledges the strength of the ultraterrestrial viewpoint present while having little doubt that a proportion of sightings must be from a "technical" civilisation: i.e. "nuts and bolts" craft.

Gilbertson's first contribution is more in the way of synthesized elements of the occult drawing salient points to connect up into a thesis to amplify Roberts's thoughts. He gives potted biographies of various individuals and groups (such as men in black), plus types of being answering to the same basic description at the Dark Gods syndrome level, and which are accompanied by similar hallmarks and identical phenomena. The same beings have over the centuries manifested and been described in different cultural contexts. As he says: "UFOs and spacemen are but one repetition of a very old theme."

Also in analysing the UFO enigma, Gilbertson concludes that the phenomenon has a two-tier aim: to fashion public belief according to its own wishes by believable factors; to make officialdom wary of acting because of absurd factors involved. The diversity of messages also created disharmony and confusion among the wide range of cults seeking spiritual enlightenment.

The arguments add up to a seeming coherence, but I would like to see much of these argued statistically. Also the lack of detailed referencing is irritating to the serious researcher. Much will be familiar to the occultist/ufologist, but the synthesis is easy to grasp and acts as a somewhat encyclopaedic introduction to the weightier contributions by Roberts which follow.

Here Roberts stylishly constructs a narrative, beginning with a view of the world in the beginning, including Atlantis, before plunging into a defence of conspiratorial theories and coming as it does in the wake of Wilson and Shea's "Illuminati" trilogy success should prove a popular non-fictional counterpoint. He makes his points tellingly, knows his occult history and bears bad news for New Age cults and their vacantly smiling apostles. The capitalist elite in such cartels as the Bilderburg Group are the subject of sinister innuendo, but Gilbertson is on hand to follow with his "Antidote to Paranoia".

Gilbertson argues that we have powers of choice and should think positively and a brief epilogue has the authors advising the reader to ignore the false prophets and be discerning.

Colin Wilson contributes a "Foreword" (he seems to have made Foreword writing a secondary profession) though admitting "that I am not entirely happy with it" (the book's contents that is, not writing forewords, which no doubt delight his bank manager). However, I would briefly take issue with Wilson that TV treatment is "usually slanted" so that those with pro-UFO views are made to look foolish. Generally I think it is a great deal more intelligently and fairly presented than is the case with the Press.

So, to sum up. A thesis has been presented which is an attractive one. Those who share a belief in a phenomenal reality, as I do, cannot easily dismiss much of the scholarly information gathered here, though my increasing mistrust of conspiracy theories and the attendant paranoia gives me a different relationship to much data here. Hence, I must admit to being essentially sitting on a hypothetical fence in the company of Colin Wilson. In conversation Tony Roberts is very animated on this subject and his enthusiasm is unbridled here, with the ideas presented with great prose élan. Well written, well argued and maybe the authors will convince you. I do not think we have heard the last of this topic from the Roberts pen.

"THE HOUSE OF LORDS UFO DEBATE". Illustrated, Full Transcript with Preface by Lord Clancarty (Brinsley Le Poer Trench) and Notes by John Michell (Open Head Press/Pentacle Books, £2-95. From Open Head Press, 2 Blenheim Crescent, London W11 1NN, £3-25, inc. p&p).

Big, bad, bogeyman Benn may just this once have a valid point. The verbal antics of their lordships debating flying saucers is a mixture of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, the observations of the Smash pseudo-potato aliens and a Monty Pythonesque constriction taking one's breath away.

If the standard of conjecture upon UFOs is typical of the Upper House's deliberations I would hate to see their lordships entrusted with anything terribly serious. Not that UFOs are trivial or that the debate was wholly farcical. It is just that the polarisation of views (a contest between the nuts and bolts brigade and the misidentification and myth stance) leaves the essential core untouched. I know Lord Clancarty, who initiated this historical debate into the topic and can vouch for his sincerity. A gentleman all the way, though I cannot share much of his ufological universe, he showed restraint during the debate as unknowledgable nitwits preferred to deny the reality of the UFO EXPERIENCE. In fact, much of the subject's complexity was never expressed, but it is commendable that so many of their noble lordships have joined the Earl of Clancarty's all-party UFO study group. Perhaps this sad gap in their education will be illuminated by a degree of enlightenment.

Probably the debate achieved very little but a significant fact is that it aroused a great deal of public interest. Shun stuffy economics and scary defence, UFOs are more fun. The public gallery was packed and Hansard sold out with the speed of soft porn.

Hence we have already a second edition of this book on the January 18, 1979, debate. A UFO on the cover seems to be physically warping Big Ben and inside is the full transcript with preface and afterword by Lord Clancarty. There is also a series of margin notes by John Michell putting a number of comments into perspective or fleshing them out in his inimitable constructive and wry style. By usefully amplifying obscure points not necessarily known to non-UFO buffs, Michell aids the general reader and he puts that public hero von Daniken in his place by describing him as an "opportunistic UFO writer". Which is what Michell and Lord Clancarty are most certainly not.

Their encyclopaedic knowledge of the subject is considerably at odds with that of the debating lords, whose comments range from the interesting to the ludicrous.

As for the individuals taking part, a few personalities and attitudes worthy of some quick comments are:

Lord Trefargne's penny-pinching support for only voluntary UFO research and no money from the Government is pitiful. When funds can be found to support the most outrageous avant-garde "artistic" works and useless scientific studies, this is monstrous.

Lord Davies of Leek is seemingly unaware that his stressed differentiation between a BVM and a UFO sighting is not in respect of one line of research: inviolable.

The Bishop of Norwich senses an element of credulity and superstition, plus the dichotomy between spirituality and today's fear of the excesses of technology. His comments on UFOs and a religious subculture with reference to gnostic heresies I would have liked to have seen in a more developed form.

Lord Gladwyn cheerily assumes UFOs to have nothing to do with party politics, though some aspects of cultism smack to me of elitist fascism.

Lord Rankeillour correctly makes a point John Michell made ten or so years ago and which is as relevant today that "there are no known experts" on UFOs. Lord Hewlett believing Sir Bernard Lovell's pronouncements as if Holy Writ is as bad as Lord Strabolgi doing much the same with those of Dr Edward U. Condon.

The behaviour of ufologists themselves, however, is worth reflecting upon in this context. They can in many cases be ungentlemanly-womanly and their processes of democracy can leave much to be desired. As for the Lower Chamber, the volatile crackpots there make both ufologists and the peers appear pleasantly eccentric but harmless.

forms of religious symbolism; these being archetypal events well appreciated in folkloric and contactee ufological circles; but in their breadth in 1905 and associated with the Welsh Revival, I would agree with the authors, "we have presented to us a microcosm of mystical experience. And, too, of human response to this experience."

The latter part of this 36-page work is devoted to consideration of the evidence and suggested explanations, ranging from practicalities such as St Elmo's Fire, fireflies and drunken hallucinations following the temptations of the tavern. The occult elements, however, effectively add another dimension and the authors conclude there are no easy answers to the mysteries and that the work be regarded as a substantial reference for discussion and future research.

It is a painstaking work of considerable archive research and the locations were visited for the purpose of assessing counter-arguments of what might explain the phenomena. A most intelligent and reasonable work which should be taken as a model for researching such archive and speculative material.

MAGONIA. Independent magazine devoted to broad examination of UFO phenomena and reaction with society and the individual. Q. Sub. £1-75; U.S. 5 dollars. Cheques and money orders to be made payable to John Rimmer, 64 Alric Avenue, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 4JW. No. 2. John Hind on the scientific techniques of using UFO motifs; Nigel Watson delves into "The Shadowland of Ufology"; Peter Rogerson's international catalogue of major cases continues. No. 3. Nigel Watson's second part of his "Shadowland" (in No. 4) is exchanged for "Airships and Invaders; Background to a Social Panic"; Jenny Randles reviews a curious Wallasey case full of psychological strangeness. No. 4. John Hind reassesses "Passport to Magonia"; John Harney examines the historical development of thought on life on other worlds; Kevin McClure on ufologists' hobby attitude. The magazine has hard-hitting editorials plus notes, queries, and excellent reviews.

***** UFO INSIGHT. Printed and published by Federation UFO Research. Six-issue sub. £1-80 (U.S. 5 dollars). Pay by cheque or P.O. made out to Federation UFO Research and addressed to UFO Insight, 277B West Street, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 3HU. No. 4. Chunky 33-page duplicated issue. Despite "nuts and bolts" bias (the editorial being quite harsh) a sensible mag. The interview with J. Allen Hynek being particularly interesting. Also impressive is the evaluation level of a full listing of 1977 unexplained cases investigated by FUFOR. S.W. Banks adds to the interminable internecine squabbles which plague ufology and diverts attention from the subject in hand. A hoax is ably exposed and S.R. Cleaver shows how a CEIII can be published and taken at face value. Plus Tim Childerhouse on artificial satellites; a Caravelle and UFOs (also No. 5); and three months happenings in the sky (each issue). No. 5. Lengthy and detailed translation of Jose Figueiredo's manual of psycho-physical effects in ufology which greatly impressed me -- particularly the discussion of aero-ionisation. Llanerchymedd UFO case demystified to some extent. Plus material on investigation equipment. More on the Tony Pace fictitious institute piece and Llanerchymedd probe argument. Folkloric mythos and UFOs interestingly given from the Russian point of view by W.I. Sanarow. Investigations are given by Mark A Tyrrell, Jenny Randles and others. David L. Rees on the usefulness of resources centres and articles reassessing sightings.

***** SKYWATCH. Informal publication devoted to ufology and related subjects. B. From David Rees, 92 Hillcrest Road, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK5 SE. Price unknown. No. 35. Rees on Cottingley photos and calling for graphology analysis of witnesses; infamous Pace attack on Randles highlighted; Amityville Horror; John Hind on international definition; "Psiufological Phenomana" by Mark Moravec. No. 36. Main items include Jenny Randles as "The Bitch is Back" about the bizarre reputation she has, BUFORA conference commentary justification, but most particularly, and most particularly the lunar "misidentification" case in No. 35. BUFORA research director Tony Pace replies to these points in a tough, no-nonsense and relentless manner (letters on this in No. 37). Outside the ubiquitous bickering which is so typical of ufology, Hilary Evans argues "PSI and the UFO Paradox"; Keith Basterfield takes a psychological angle; while Lionel Beer did not enjoy "Friends in Space", a TV parody on ufology I regarded as reasonably accurate. No. 37. Allen H. Greenfield intelligently on UFO mythos; Rip Hepple on LNM; and usual newsdesk of various items, letters, reviews, adverts.

UFO 8. ***** NORTHERN UFO NEWS. Journal of the Northern UFO Network and published eight times a year in monthly series with NORTHERN UFOLOGY. From 8 Whitethroat Walk, Birchwood, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 6PQ. Sub. £3-60. No. 69. Brief emergency issue. No. 70. Editor Jenny Randles on TV satire "Friends in Space" which I found superb viewing and felt the cutting wit was neatly and diplomatically blunted by the ending. Nigel Watson discusses role playing in ufology. No. 71. Jenny Randles replies to Skywatch's resurrection of a CEIII Moon misidentification debateable case. No. 73. (Nn UFOLOGY). Issue debated is the possibility of UFOs and psychic link. Contributors include Jenny Randles, Hilary Evans, Patricia Austin, Kevin McClure, Martin Keatman and Andy Collins. No. 74. Jenny Randles on definitions; Hilary Evans on fieldwork v theorising. No. 75. (Nn UFOLOGY). Interesting data on physical evidence giving a strongly non-ETH leaning from Jenny Randles, Andy Collins, Peter Warrington and Terry Cox (on infra-red experiments). No. 76. Jenny Randles calls for new ideas; Peter Warrington on conference shortcomings and Aime Michel reutilising as his own reutilising as his own a Warrington idea; plus reports and miscellany as usual. No. 77. (Nn UFOLOGY). Six articles on theme of "UFOs in the Public Eye", all of considerable value, with splendid John Watson cover of topless beauties Nicki Debuse and Helen Ferguson. Includes my own contribution "Gradually, But Quickly, It Moved Up", which was so eccentrically edited the correct and non-ambiguous version appears here in A.S.W.R. for comparison. ***** UFO RESEARCH REVIEW. Journal of Nottingham

UFO Investigation Society. Membership details (include s.a.e.) from Mick Crewe, c/o 443 Meadow Lane, Nottingham, NG2 3GB. Vol. 5, No. 3. Sceptical approach with editor R.W. Morrell calling for caution in relation to the "paranormal" in his review of Randles & Warrington's "UFOs: A British Viewpoint". Peter A. Hill explains the Working Party and Provisional International Committee situation while Steve Orton defends the Aetherius Society against Jenny Randles. R.W. Morrell casts cold water over a Wilford sighting report and Syd Henley describes cloud formations. Les Hall writes of the role of photography in the study of UFOs and R.W. Morrell closes on ufology and definitions.

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